DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 281 997 CE 047 072

AUTHOR Niehoff, Marilee S.; Romans, M. Jay
TITLE Methodological Innovations for Training and Development: A New and Better Way.
PUB DATE Apr 87
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Washington, DC, April 20-14, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; *Adult Learning; *Assessment Centers (Personnel); *Case Studies; Educational Strategies; *Group Discussion; Postsecondary Education; Program Effectiveness; *Training Methods

ABSTRACT

Research indicates that conventional training activities are largely ineffective in bringing about behavior change in such dimensions as leadership, initiative, planning and organization, judgment, independence, and delegation. The Niehoff method is a training and development method that was designed to respond to the adult mode of learning. It is based on the premise that learners do better with active participation, meaningful content, constructive immediate feedback, and small group discussion. The method combines the assessment center, case study, and small group discussion modes of training. The Niehoff training program consists of five custom case studies developed from data collected before the training session and reflecting real-world situations and problems that have been encountered by the participants. Because the trainees are given an opportunity to work together and find real solutions, there is a much greater likelihood that they will transfer their training to the job. Training session participants are divided into five to seven round-table groups, each containing five individuals. Participants are given 30 minutes to prepare their presentations; cases are presented in about 15 minutes each, with 5 minutes between each presentation to allow participants to complete their feedback sheets. A concluding round robin feedback and summary takes 20-40 minutes. Pilot programs using the method have been successful. (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED281997

Methodological Innovations for Training and Development: A New and Better Way

by Marilee S. Niehoff and
M. Jay Romans

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M M Niehoff

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

OE-84 7072

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABSTRACT

Research indicates that conventional training activities are largely ineffective in bringing about behavior change in dimensions such as leadership, initiative, planning and organization, judgment, independence and delegation. Training programs, while providing stimulation, information and enlightenment, too often permit uneven participation, little or no feedback, and temporary change.

A new training system is described. Responsive to the adult mode, the system presumes that learners do better with active participation, meaningful content, constructive, immediate feedback and small group discussion. Pilot programs have proved successful at combining the case study method, the assessment center method and small group interaction.

Cultures and behaviors are resistant to change, but they can be shaped over time with focused training strategies.

Early in the 1970's American industry voiced complaint about inefficiency as reflected in low productivity per man hour and a decline in product quality. Public criticism also became more vocal concerning these issues. Foreign manufacturers were undercutting U. S. prices, gaining market advantage until the implications for the domestic economy and the world trade balance became ominous. Quick fixes were sought, and a flurry of productivity-improvement solutions were put into place, many of which were borrowed from the Japanese. Some of these fit the American culture and were effective; many others enjoyed a short tenure of popularity and then slipped gradually away. The overall effectiveness of many training and development activities were under siege.

Nine reasons why conventional training and development activities are ineffective in bringing about sustained behavior change in dimensions such as leadership, initiative, planning and organization, judgment, independence and delegation were identified by Byham (1977). The reasons:

1. Practice does not make perfect.
2. Tenure does not make a good supervisor.
3. Experience is a poor teacher.
4. Learning by mistakes is a waste of time.
5. Trial and error learning is inefficient.
6. Systems can't change people.
7. Bosses are often poor models.
8. Self-study isn't enough.
9. Training alone will not produce behavior change.

Laird (1983) also pointed out that although training can be defined as "an experience, a discipline, or a regimen which causes people to acquire new, predetermined behavior," research indicates that behavioral changes via training alone are rare. In "New Trends in Applied Management Development," (1983) Livingston agreed that "generalized or 'generic' management training describes the majority of the programs now offered by organizations and universities. Such training does a reasonably good job of providing awareness, stimulation, concepts and new ways of thinking. But the problem lies in what it does not deliver". Training programs have traditionally provided the transfer of knowledge and skills only to be lost when applicability on the job went largely unsupported (Niehoff & Romans, 1982).

Behavioral scientists have long been aware of the effects which the presence of other people exert upon the performance and thinking of an individual and it has also been known for a long time that an individual's learning may be facilitated if that individual works in a group. Trainers, except for their business games and simulations, have too often ignored the fact (Niehoff, 1984). Whole organizations ignore this fact, continuing to embrace the structures and philosophies of the 50's, and carefully perpetuating the status quo (Niehoff, 1984). Many companies spend large sums of money procreating outdated management principles and actually blocking efforts for positive change (Niehoff, 1985).

The present-day population of workers is completely different than ever before. There are more women; minorities are enjoying increased participation, and the median age is advancing. Workers are pushing for, and getting, more say-so about their jobs and how to do them (Peters & Austin, 1985). They are also pushing for, and not always getting, the training and

development they need to function well in these times of rapid change. Businesses and industries, organizations of all kinds, are feeling, increasingly, the need to educate, train, and re-train their people to deal with the complexities of today and the probabilities of tomorrow. Our training rooms bulge with groups which are more diverse than could have been imagined when the current systems were established and when many of the trainers were learning their profession.

How has the profession responded? Given their constraints, the business climate, and reluctance to change on the part of too many business people, still there are many exciting things taking place. Programs have been established to attempt to serve the needs of the new clientele: remedial, in some cases; highly advanced and state-of-the art technologically in other cases, and all degrees in between. Serious attempts are being made to improve productivity through training and development. Yet, there are still questions about the over-all benefits of training. There are questions about transfer of learning to the job and whether or not training efforts really produce lasting, day-to-day improvements. The big question becomes whether or not the organization's training and development efforts are cost effective. The old bottom line.

Interviews with trainees will reveal that one of the reasons for some of the questions is the seemingly un-changing response of the trainer to the diversity around them. Research has shown that learning by active participation is much more effective than listening to lectures. Adults, especially, want meaningful, practical learning experiences which they can put to work immediately. Most trainers are aware of this and despite the fact that they put great stock in their paper and pencil tests and games,

they tend to drone on, fascinated with their power over their audience, their vast stores of knowledge and their command of the language.

Today's trainers and educators need information about the identified learning-style needs of the new population they serve, and they need new methods and techniques. Much has been written about the hardware and software which is useful for this purpose: computers, video devices, teleconferencing, advanced communication systems and others. Very little has been done to help the traditional educator realize that adults are turned off by the paternalistic styles of the past and that new, participative, dynamic, useful and authentic learning is being demanded today.

Out of this dilemma emerged The Niehoff Method. A new and highly successful method of training and development, it consists of a combination of the assessment center method, the case study method, and the small group discussion mode.

The content of training sessions using The Niehoff Method is five custom case studies, developed from data collected before the training session and reflecting the real-world situations and problems encountered by the participants. This means that the content is important to the trainees--they are working together on solving specific problems and finding real solutions. Thus, there is a much stronger likelihood that there will be meaningful transfer to the job.

Content also includes structured feedback sheets and relevant readings. The feedback sheets are filled out after each participant has finished presenting her/his case. After all cases have been presented in turn, and all of the feedback sheets have been filled out, oral hot-seat feedback also takes place where each presenter receives instant, constructive critiques

about how they handled the problems of the case (content) and how they came across to the other group members (process). All parts of the exercise are timed and groups kept on task by a timekeeper in each group. The function of the trainer is to act as facilitator: first, explaining the exercise, the procedures, the elements of constructive feedback which can and should be both positive and negative. At the conclusion of the exercise, the facilitator also pulls it all together by presenting a summary of observations, conclusions, impressions and principles.

Ideal size of the group ranges from 25 to 35; five to seven groups of five people are seated at round tables and provided with manuals which contain the cases, feedback sheets and appropriate readings which may or may not be referred to during the session. About thirty minutes is needed for all participants to prepare their presentations; fifteen minutes has been found to be appropriate for presentation of each case, with about five minutes between presentations for the completion of the feedback sheets. The conclusion, with the round robin feedback and the summary takes about twenty to forty minutes.

Participants are asked to consider the following:

- The content of their case; how they solved the problems, made the decisions, and whether or not the others agreed with them. Their knowledge.

- Was there any conflict? How was it resolved?

- Quantity and quality of their presentations; time management.

- Presentation skills: communication abilities, persuasiveness, clarity of ideas, organizaing ability, language facility, others.

- Feedback quality; were they more comfortable giving or receiving feedback; differences in expressing positive or negative ideas; how did self perception match up with the feedback from others?

- What were their thoughts and feelings throughout this learning experience?

- How can this learning be applied, back on the job. What is their commitment for specific strategies to enhance the growth and development they have experienced on an ongoing basis?

This method provides active learning for all participants, not just the vocal few. Even participation is assured, along with increased awareness and motivation for ongoing, continuous learning and applicability back on the job. Persuasiveness and human relations skills, as well as the ability to communicate and solve problems are all practiced in this engaging process. Issues of conflict, diversity and similarities are recognized and dealt with in a non-threatening environment; yet, the conditions and problems are real-world, not canned. Perhaps the greatest benefit of this superb method is the increased awareness of the effects of one's own behavior; the feeling that what one does, and how one performs on the job, really does count.

Cultures--organizational climates--like individual behaviors, are resistant to change and need to be examined and adjusted from time to time. Both individual behavior and cultural change efforts can employ this training tool successfully for growth and development and sustained improvement. The Niehoff Method really works.

REFERENCES

Byham, W. C. (1977). Changing supervisory and managerial behavior: Part I: Problems with conventional training. Training and Development Journal, April, 3 - 6.

Byham, W. C. (1977). Changing supervisory and managerial behavior: Part II. Training and Development Journal, May, 10 - 16.

Laird, D. (1983). Approaches to Training and Development. Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley.

Livingston, S. (1983). New trends in applied management development. Training and Development Journal, January, 3.

Niehoff, M. S. (1984). A format for participative training. Training and Development Journal, February, 7.

Niehoff, M. S. (1984). Organizational development challenge: jobs and gender. Organization Development Journal, 2, 4 - 6.

Niehoff, M. S. (1985). Some computer whiz kids short out in management, The Dallas Morning News, September 28, 1985, 2 G.

Niehoff, M. S. & Romans, M. J. (1982). Needs assessment as step one toward enhancing productivity. Personnel Administrator, 27, 35 - 39.

Peters, T. & Austin N. (1985). A Passion for Excellence. New York: Random House.